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USSR Cuba Force Clouds Debate on SALT

U. S. officials insist brigade-size troop unit constitutes no offensive threat, but senators link removal to treaty

By Clarence A. Robinson, Jr.

Washington—Public reaction to the presence of a brigade-size Soviet force—including satellite communications experts—based in Cuba is becoming a significant new element in Senate debate on whether Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty 2 should be ratified.

The fate of the strategic arms agreements may hinge on the success of the Carter Administration in forcing the USSR to withdraw its troops from the island.

U. S. officials said last week that the Russian forces in Cuba are positioned there for several reasons, but that none of them are believed for offensive excursions in the Western Hemisphere because the Russian brigade is at the end of the Soviet supply line. Reasons for basing the force in Cuba are believed to include:

- Protection of a wide range of Soviet early warning radar equipment and a satellite control and monitoring station for reconnaissance and early warning space-

craft over the Western Hemisphere. A Soviet satellite ground facility is located at Torrens, near Pinar del Rio.

- Use of an armored and defensive artillery battalion to defend Soviet MiG-23 Flogger air defense interceptor and MiG-27 strike fighter aircraft operating in Cuba with Soviet pilots.

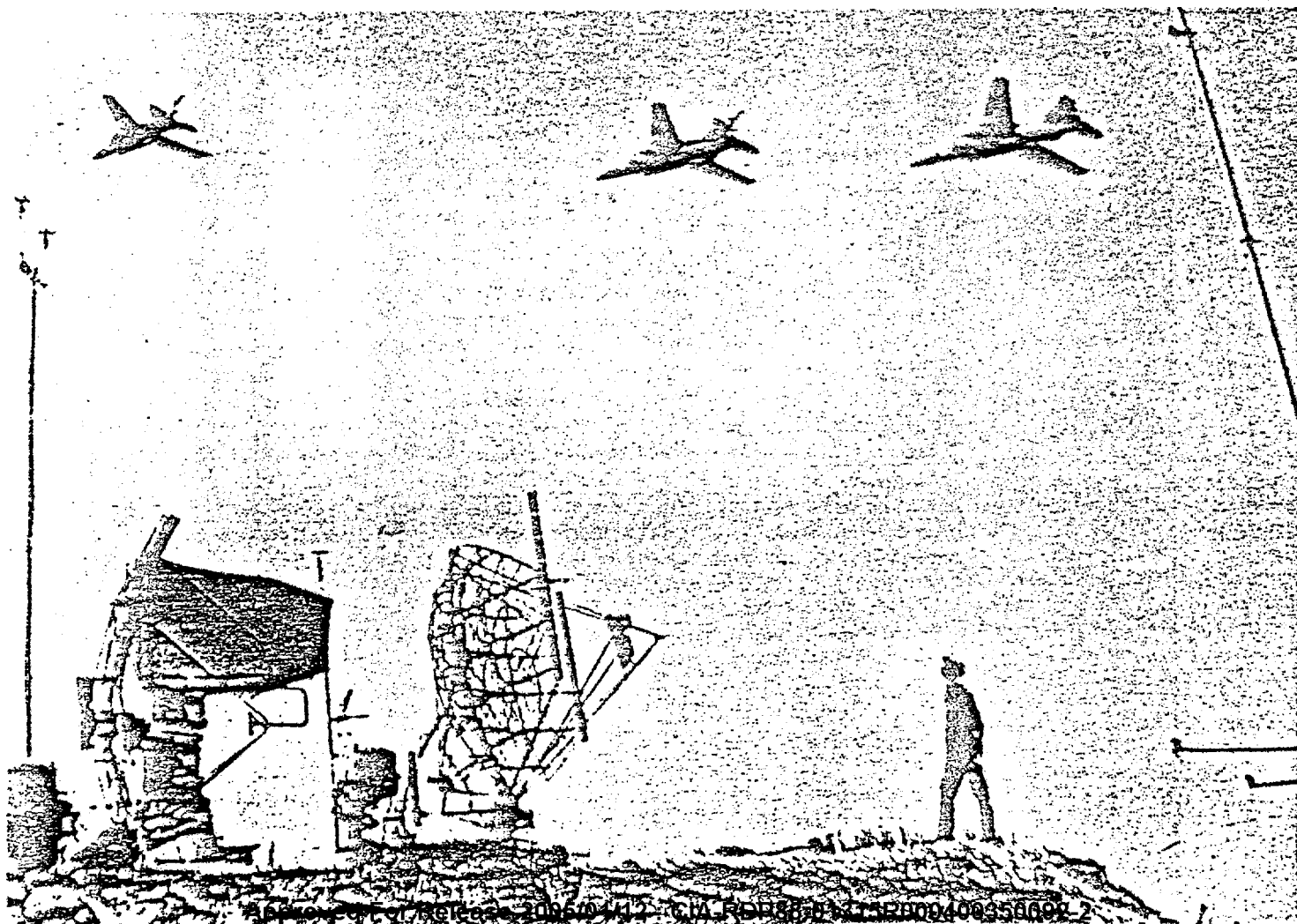
- Training Cuban forces by conducting combined Soviet-Cuban army operations to improve the combat performance of

Cuban forces, considered less than adequate in some African battles.

- Demonstration to Third World nations that the balance of power has tipped in favor of the USSR. U. S. experts believe it will be difficult if not impossible to get the force removed, making it a symbol of Soviet freedom of action and thus providing a psychological effect in Central and South America.

- Defense of large dish type antennas associated with electronic intelligence. The location and composition of equipment operated by the Soviets in Cuba is to intercept International Telecommunications Satellite Organization traffic from the spacecraft over the Atlantic Ocean. The Defense Dept. rents channels on the spacecraft for communications.

U. S. officials are blaming President Carter for the inability of the intelligence



Soviet MiG-23 variable-geometry air defense interceptors fly in formation above USSR/East German Long Talk surveillance and

other in the ground attack role equipped with MiG-27s, a version of the MiG-23 known as the Flogger D. The Flogger has been designed